

FOUR-FOUR-TWO stands for four on the floor, four-barrel carb, and dual exhausts. The factory engineered all this for police pursuit work, but the 442 is now available to the public at large. Our test car also had heavy-duty suspension and 20 extra horses...

HOT OLDS F-85 CUTLASS ROAD TEST

by Bob McVay, Assistant Technical Editor

IN THEIR EFFORTS to please most people most of the time, Oldsmobile Division has a 1964¾ offering for drivers who want just a bit more performance and handling. It's designated by the numbers 442 but, on the official price sticker, it's called *Option Number B-09 Police Apprehender Pursuit*. This car costs an extra \$285.14 over the regular, everyday F-85 Cutlass.

Olds engineers haven't restricted the performance package to the engine alone. The price quoted above includes heavy-duty front and rear springs and shocks, a sturdier anti-roll bar up front, one in the rear as well, plus 7.50 x 14-inch Red-Line tires. These items bring the car's usually soft springing up to a nice, firm combination that gives a solid feeling of control and handling, with no loss in riding comfort.

The big under-hood change lies in a wilder camshaft, some valving modifications, and the use of extra-quality, precision main bearings and rods to withstand the higher revs this engine's bound to get. Although there's only a 20-hp increase and the torque output of 355 pounds-foot is identical with the top standard Cutlass (290-hp), the 442 feels and is much stronger than you'd

expect from a mere 20-hp increase. A heavy-duty clutch and 3.36 rear axle are also parts of the 442 package. But as sometimes happens, someone missed the rear-axle boat. Our instruments told us our 442 had a 3.55 differential. As for our specification table, we list the 3.55 as standard, not the 3.36.

The characteristic that impressed us most about the 442 was its extremely wide performance range. Even with the wilder cam, it'd idle smoothly and quietly in traffic, then pull from as low as 15 mph in fourth without bucking or stalling. It isn't a car for the ladies in our audience—the stiffer clutch, non-power brakes, and stiff four-speed transmission restrict it to the man with muscle. But *he'll* certainly enjoy himself behind the wheel.

The 442 would come alive and roar when given its head on the track. No limited-slip rear axle was fitted to our test car. It would've improved performance and driving pleasure considerably. Nevertheless, straightaway acceleration was impressive. Zero to 30, 45, and 60 mph took only 3.1, 5.1, and 7.5 seconds respectively, while the measured quarter-mile stopped our watches at 15.5 seconds. The fifth-wheel speedometer

showed a true 90 mph as we crossed the end of the strip.

And flat-out acceleration wasn't the only impressive part of the 442's added horsepower. Highway passing times and distances (from 40-60 mph and 50-70 mph) were equally outstanding. The ability of a car to pass other vehicles quickly while spending a minimum of time on the wrong side of a two-lane road is a definite safety factor. Needless to say, the 442 moved out with authority in any gear and, when pushed hard, was in the left lane a bare minimum of time.

The engine's wide torque range, plus the optional 3.55 axle, are a good match. The times quoted for highway passing were outstanding, but we made them in second gear. Leaving the car in fourth, it still accelerated from 40 to 60 mph in 6.9 seconds and from 50 to 70 mph in 6.5 seconds. Only in an emergency would you have to worry about downshifting to pass. Performance wouldn't be quite so good with the 3.36 axle the 442 is supposed to have, but this model would still be far ahead of the standard Cutlass at the end of the quarter mile.

Top speed down Riverside's back



F-85's heavy-duty suspension would bottom, but only when thrown through high-speed dips like this at 65+ mph. Special rear anti-

roll bar hangs down under full suspension travel. It made big contribution to car's extra-good handling over rough back roads.

straight was 116 mph at 5500 rpm on our electric tachometer. It seems strange that Oldsmobile engineers fit a tach to the big, luxurious, automatic-equipped Starfire convertible but not to the F-85 442. A console-mounted tach is offered as an option on the regular Cutlass, but it might be better to forget it and mount an accessory tach on the dash where you can see it and still keep your eyes on the road.

As we said before, the heavy-duty suspension components are a big improvement over the F-85's usually soft ride. Hard cornering brought out a minimum of body lean. The car felt stable and controllable and could be cornered fast with confidence. The combination of the Red-Line tires and stiffer suspension gave the car a good grip on the pavement. The 442 showed far less understeer than the standard Cutlass coupe and could be taken through a bend (and out of it) much faster. It just goes to show that, with the proper options, a five-passenger car can have good handling characteristics and still keep its comfortable ride. Comfort was enhanced by vinyl-covered, foam-padded buckets in front and a bench seat in the rear. Bound and rebound control was good at any speed on all highway surfaces. We found only one dip that would bottom the suspension—our lead picture shows this graphically.

Oldsmobile offers heavy-duty brakes with metallic linings, and we heartily

recommend them, especially for a car like the 442 that's intended for faster-than-normal motoring. Our test car had the standard drums. They did a good job during our tests, giving straight-line stops with a minimum of swerving and fade. The rear wheels tended to lock up first during panic stops from 60 mph, making quick pumping necessary for short stopping. We found these brakes perfectly adequate for normal chores, but the Cutlass 442 isn't a normal car. It goes faster and handles better than run-of-the-mill sedans and therefore should have every advantage. The best possible brakes available, in this case the heavy-duty metallics, would be a definite advantage, even on the stock F-85 Oldsmobile.

The standard brakes are self-adjusting. Special cooling flanges fitted to the drums helped them cool quickly after constant hard use (about six panic stops) faded them considerably. To date, they're the strongest stock brakes the F-85 has had, and they're far better than our last year's test car had. But they could be (and should be) stronger for the 442 if you intend any pursuit or apprehending.

Mileage was more or less what we made it. Out at the Riverside track during performance and high-speed testing, mileage dropped down to an eight-mpg low. With the car's 10.25 compression ratio, we could use only premium. Steady highway driving at 65-70 mph gave a very good figure of 19.8 mpg, while city driving dropped to 14-15 miles per gallon.

Just to see what very careful driving could produce, we filled the tank, drove onto the freeway, and covered 100 miles at a steady 55 mph. We refilled immediately after leaving the freeway. The result was 24.1 mpg, which shows that the careful driver, if he works at it, can have his cake and eat it. An economy performance car is hard to find in this country.

To say we didn't have any complaints with the 442 wouldn't be true, but the few we had certainly didn't dim the otherwise bright aspects of the car. Our Muncie gearbox had a linkage adjustment problem and took too much power to change gears. It also tended to hang up on fast shifts. The reach to third was far too long for our liking.

It also took considerable leg-power to work the heavy-duty clutch and non-power-assisted brakes. But both worked well, and we noticed no clutch slippage, even during hardest use.

Oldsmobile's power steering, with four full turns between locks, may be fine for regular passenger cars, but again, we feel it's a bit too slow for a car of the 442's caliber. It was smooth enough but a little vague in action.

Since many makers refuse to design a car seat adjustable to different-sized drivers, we appreciated the four-way power seat in our test car. The addition of a tilting wheel should let anyone fit his new Cutlass. Yet, somehow it doesn't seem right that you have to pay extra to make your car fit. We're still in favor of seats that adjust for height and rake with simple tools. *continued*



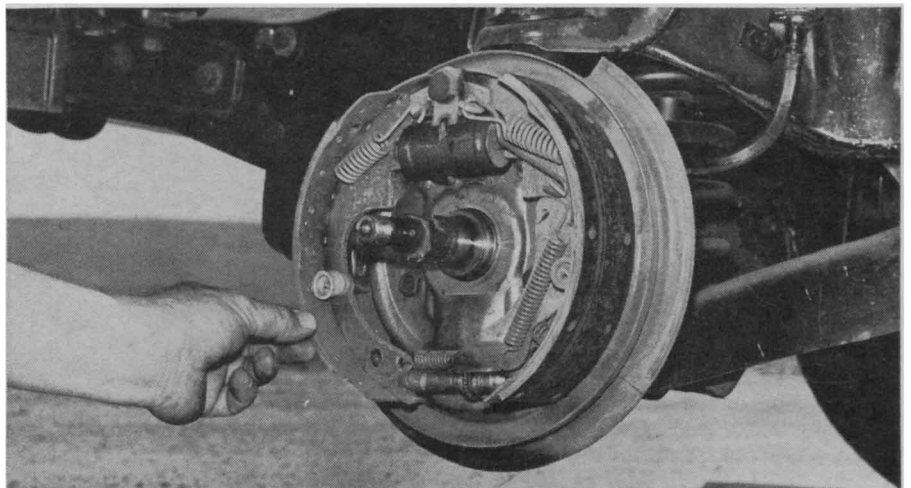
CHARGING AROUND TIGHT, UPHILL BENDS SHOWED CAR'S NEED FOR LIMITED-SLIP REAR END. PERFORMANCE WAS GOOD EVEN WITHOUT IT.



Under full throttle, the 442 would burn off the line fiercely. But feathering the gas pedal gave us strong, consistent good times.



Cutlass' left rear wheel always locked up first and was tough to unlock, yet stopping power was consistently strong and swerve-free, giving us a number of stops before fading.

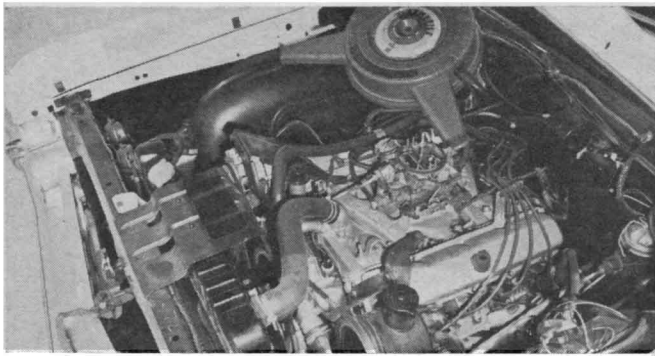


Regular 9.5-inch, cast-iron drums with riveted linings are standard, with metallic linings optional. We strongly recommend the metallics for anything but regular duty.

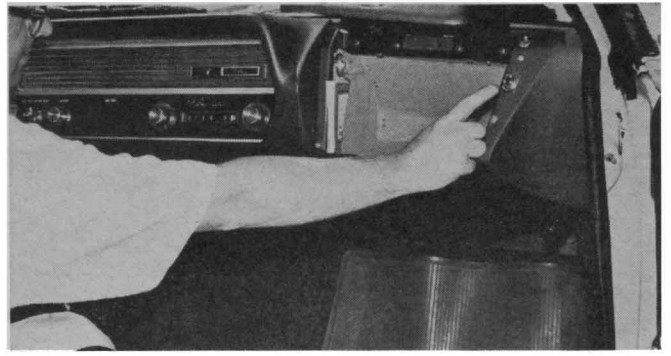
PHOTOS BY PAT BROLIER



Well arranged, easy-to-read dashboard should have full complement of gauges, without all the warning lights of standard 442. Third gear takes long stretch for most drivers.



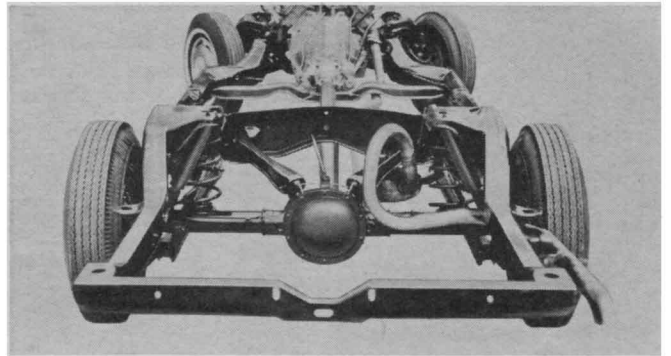
Although it looks just like the 290-hp Cutlass engine, the 442 has a wilder cam, precision bearings, and 20 more horsepower.



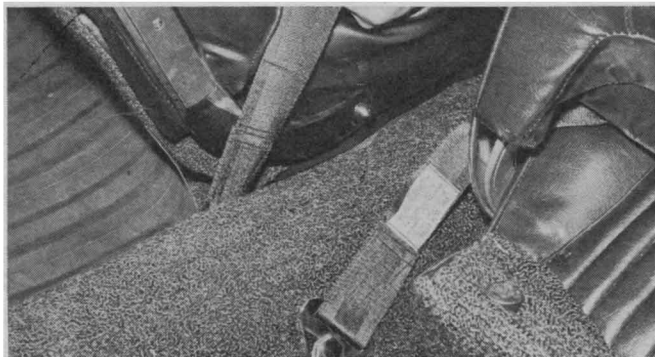
One unusual feature is glove compartment door. It swings upward. Electric deck-lid release proved a handy, useful item.



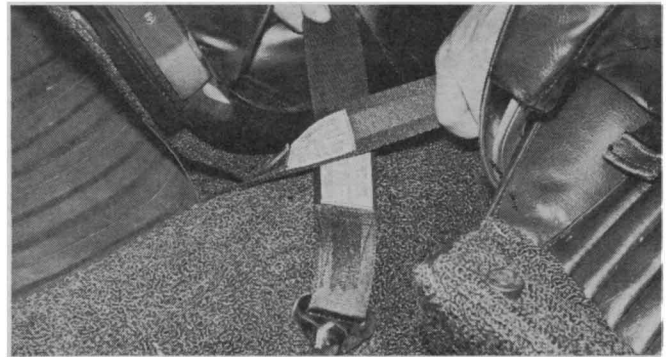
Cutlass' trunk is wide and deep, with a flat floor. Anyone who can't find enough space here should consider an El Camino.



Underneath F-85's rattle-free body is Guard-Beam perimeter frame. Four-link, coil-spring suspension is used at rear.



Improperly installed seat belts have been a constant problem in test cars. Here they would pull directly against bolt heads.



Proper use of belts (crisscrossed) puts pressures where they belong for maximum strength and safety in event of an accident.

EVEN WITHOUT LIMITED-SLIP, CUTLASS 442 CAN MATCH ACCELERATION TIMES WITH ANYTHING IN ITS CLASS — AND FINISH AHEAD OF MOST





Charging around Riverside's twisty road course proved the 442 could easily out-corner conventional Cutlass, thanks to H-D suspension, bigger anti-roll bar, and Red-Line tires. Car had mild understeer, good control and stability, didn't flood out.

OLDS F-85 442 *continued*

As it was, the Cutlass proved quite comfortable for trips of any length. Foam-padded buckets give good lateral and under-leg support, with the power seat lending almost infinite adjustability. The padded dash is a Cutlass standard item, but we'd prefer a full complement of gauges instead of the warning lights used for oil, temperature, and generator. One unusual feature is the glove box door—it swings up. Anyone who goes to drive-in restaurants isn't going to like it.

Four-four-two stands for four on the floor, a four-barrel carb, and dual exhausts. It's Oldsmobile's answer to the extra-hot items offered by the competition, and it serves its intended purpose well. It offers Oldsmobile owners interested in performance something that performs just as well as, and in most cases better than, the competition. Olds engineers have done a fine job with the suspension system. The H-D components plus the stiffer anti-roll bar up front and the rear anti-roll bar combine to make the 442 a car that can cover ground quickly with a high degree of safety and comfortable riding qualities. Naturally, a few items leave some room for improvement, but as we drove it, the F-85 Cutlass 442 is quite an automobile. Its extremely wide range of good traffic tractability to all-out drag-strip performance was impressive. Its fuel economy was surprising (yes, it was figured on a corrected speedometer). So we'll have to give the 442 a pretty enthusiastic send-off. No automobile can be all things to all people, but the 442 comes a lot closer than most. Why did they wait so long?

/MT

OLDS F-85 CUTLASS 442

2-door, 5-passenger hardtop

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: Power steering, windshield washer, 2-speed wipers, electric deck-lid release, electric clock, back-up lights, crankcase vent, outside mirror, anti-glare mirror, power seat, simulated wire wheel covers, Police Apprehender Pursuit package

BASE PRICE: \$2784

PRICE AS TESTED: \$3658.74 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 2701 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 6000 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph.....	3.1 secs.
0-45 mph.....	5.1
0-60 mph.....	7.5

PASSING TIMES AND DISTANCES

40-60 mph.....	3.6 secs., 263 ft.
50-70 mph.....	4.5 secs., 396 ft.

Standing start 1/4-mile 15.5 secs. and 90 mph

Speeds in gears @ 5200 rpm					
1st	45 mph	3rd	75 mph		
2nd	57 mph	4th	116 mph (top speed @ 5400 rpm)		

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading	30	45	51	61	71	81
Weston electric speedometer ..	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed mph per 1000 rpm in top gear21.5 mph

Stopping Distances—from 30 mph, 31 ft.; from 60 mph, 176 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv V-8
Bore: 3.9375 ins.
Stroke: 3.3850 ins.
Displacement: 330 cu. ins.
Compression ratio: 10.25:1
Horsepower: 310 @ 5200 rpm
Torque: 355 lbs.-ft. @ 3600 rpm
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.94
Carburetion: 1 4-bbl.
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Gearbox

4-speed manual, all synchro, floorshift

Driveshaft

1-piece, open tube

Differential

Hypoid, semi-floating
Standard ratio: 3.55:1

Suspension

Front: Heavy-duty, independent coil springs; H-D, double-acting tubular shocks; H-D anti-roll bar
Rear: Solid axle; H-D coil springs; double-acting tubular shocks; drive & torque taken through control links

Wheels and Tires

5-lug, welded-steel disc wheels
7.50 x 14, 4-ply, low-profile, Red-Line tires

Brakes

Duo-servo hydraulic, self-adjusting
Front: 9.5-ins. x 2.5 ins. wide
Rear: 9.5-ins. x 2.0 ins. wide
Effective lining area: 155.6 sq. ins.
Swept drum area: 267.8 sq. ins.

Steering

Ball nut with integral power
Turning diameter: 41 ft.
Turns lock to lock: 4.06

Body and Frame

Welded steel body on box-section frame with torque boxes
Wheelbase: 115 ins.
Track: front, 58.0 ins.; rear, 58.0 ins.
Overall length: 203 ins.
Overall width: 73.8 ins.
Curb weight: 3440 lbs.